



## A Female Adolescent Bystander's Diary and the Jewish Hungarian Holocaust

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**Gergely Kunt,**

**"A Female Adolescent Bystander's Diary and the Jewish Hungarian Holocaust"**

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**Abstract:** In his article "A Female Adolescent Bystander's Diary and the Jewish Hungarian Holocaust" Gergely Kunt analyzes the unpublished diary manuscript of Margit Molnár, a Hungarian Roman Catholic adolescent girl born in 1927 who kept a diary between 1941 and 1949. Kunt's analysis shows how Molnár viewed Jews, the persecution of Jews, and the anti-Jewish terror in Budapest. As the diary documents, Molnár's views of the Jews temporarily changed during the Arrow Cross's reign of terror in October 1944 when she received news of the Arrow Cross murdering Jews en masse in Budapest. However, once the war was over, Molnár's deep-seated anti-Semitic prejudices resurfaced and she felt that despite the previously "justified" measures against Jews, the "oppressive wealthy" Jewish Hungarian elite had once again returned.

## Gergely KUNT

### A Female Adolescent Bystander's Diary and the Jewish Hungarian Holocaust

Scholarship on the Holocaust traditionally distinguishes three generations of Jews affected by the Holocaust: the first generation who personally experienced persecution, the second generation born after 1945, and the third generation born in the 1970s and 1980s. Susan Rubin Suleiman suggests the use of an additional distinction "Generation 1.5" to denote children who were eleven years old or younger during World War II (283). Scholars who adopt Suleiman's category use it exclusively to denote victims, survivors, and descendants of the Holocaust. I argue, however, that these categories should be extended to the non-Jewish generations of countries directly involved in the Holocaust, since World War II and the Holocaust can be regarded as collective traumas that devastated entire societies. Although the experiences, value systems, and narratives of Jewish and non-Jewish persons of the era differed, the war and the Holocaust were traumatic for everyone who personally experienced them and left traces in the family histories of everyone, whether Jewish or non-Jewish. I therefore argue that extending the categories of Holocaust literature to the non-Jewish population would allow us to analyze society in its entirety instead of only witnesses, victims, and perpetrators. However, we would also need to readjust these categories to reflect the specificities of a given country's involvement in World War II and the Holocaust. In the case of Hungary, the first generation would include those who experienced World War II as adults, which means those who were born before 1922 and became adults by the time Hungary entered the war. Suleiman's Generation 1.5 would include those who were born between 1935 and 1945. However, the adolescent diary writer examined in this study was part of a generation born between 1923 and 1934 experiencing the war as adolescents and thus falling between the first generation and Suleiman's Generation 1.5.

When it comes to the experiences of children and adolescents belonging to the first generation or Suleiman's Generation 1.5, Holocaust scholarship focuses predominantly on Jewish victims and survivors with few works devoted to non-Jewish children and adolescents. One reason would be that archival research and publications related to the Holocaust focus on the victims and only mention non-Jewish persons if they were either perpetrators or part of the resistance that helped Jews during the Holocaust, which thus excludes bystanders who did not belong to either category. As such, we know of few published diaries written by non-Jewish adolescents during World War II. One rare example is the recently published adolescent diary of Brigitte Eicke (born in Berlin in 1928) (see Gröschner, Felsman, Meyer). Other scholarly accounts of Jewish survivors include Debórah Dwork's *Children with a Star*, Judith Kestenberg and Ira Brenner's *The Last Witness*, Alexandra Garbarini's *Numbered Days*, and Nicholas Stargardt's *Witness of War*. Stargardt's book in particular presents the experiences of Polish and German adolescents of the era, Jews and Christians alike.

Similarly to international Holocaust research, Hungarian Holocaust research also focuses on the accounts of Jewish victims and Hungarian public collections barely feature any accounts by non-Jewish witnesses. This is the reason why I decided to collect privately owned Hungarian diary manuscripts. To this end, I placed advertisements in newspapers and calls for privately owned diaries in local and national newspapers as well as daily, weekly and monthly papers, including leftwing, rightwing, and independent journals. I also included calls in religious media, among them Calvinist, Evangelical, and Jewish journals. My private collection now encompasses over one hundred volumes written by twenty-eight persons, the majority of whom were Christian. I either received the original manuscript or was allowed to make a digital or paper-based copy. Wherever possible, I extended my collection to other types of historical documents, such as family photographs or other personal documents. In 2010, one of my published calls for privately owned diaries was answered by Judit Molnár, who offered me her older sister Margit Molnár's diary. Margit Molnár was born in 1927 and lived with her family in Budapest where her father worked as an engineering supervisor at the Budapest Electric Company. Molnár kept a diary between 1941 and 1949, which offers insight into how a Roman Catholic adolescent girl viewed the persecution of Jews in Budapest, the persecuted Jews themselves, as well as their persecutors. All excerpts in this study are from Molnár's manuscript, which does not contain page numbers.

One of the greatest advantages of using diaries as historical sources over other forms of life writing is that diaries record the contemporary experiences and views of the author while memoirs are retrospective texts that reminisce about the past as informed by the current views of the author. Andy Alaszewski defines diaries as dated and fragmented entries created by individuals who record their experiences of a given event in close temporal proximity of the event in question, as opposed to memoirs, which form a coherent retrospective narrative (2). In this respect, Molnár's diary is of special importance, since she began writing her diary as a young adolescent whose views seem to have been heavily influenced by her family and the environment in which she was socialized.

Based on her diary entries, it is evident that Molnár followed the introduction of Hungarian anti-Jewish laws with great interest either by reading the regulations displayed on street or hearing about them from her parents. She used her diary to note down the various prohibitions affecting Jews and her thoughts on these discriminatory measures. Although my personal collection includes several Christian Hungarian adolescent diaries, Molnár's diary is the only diary to my knowledge that offers a detailed account of the persecution of Jews in Hungary during World War II. Molnár began writing her diary in February 1941, a few months before Hungary entered World War II, keeping her diary during and even after the war. It is important to note that according to Judit Molnár, Margit Molnár's diary is incomplete because Margit retrospectively chose to censor her manuscript. Before her death in 2001, Margit reread her diary and completely erased certain parts by cutting out a few lines, tearing out

certain pages, or even destroying entire volumes. Despite Margit's self-censorship, a total of fourteen volumes survived, but since Judit only read the diary after her sister's death, she could not tell what logic and criteria Margit used to censor her diary.

Molnár's family was Roman Catholic, deeply religious, and strictly observed all Roman Catholic holidays and doctrines. For instance, in 1942 Molnár wrote an entry in which she related her father's discontent over the profane symbol of the Easter Bunny, which caused Molnár to draw parallels between Easter and other religious holidays such as Christmas and the day of Santa Claus. In her comparison, Molnár references two Hungarian traditions: in one tradition Krampus, a devilish figure, delivers birch-rod to naughty children on the day of Saint Nicholas while Santa Claus brings candy to the good children. The other tradition is that in Hungary Christmas presents are brought on Christmas Eve by the infant Jesus: "Daddy doesn't like it when we say [at Easter] that the bunny is coming ... and it's enough if Baby Jesus and Santa Claus are coming [at Christmas], but for the bunny to come too, who does the bunny think he is, thinking himself so great when it's the most cowardly of animals ... I don't know either why the bunny came into fashion when it's got nothing to do with Easter. And lambs have been displaced altogether. Just like how on the day of Saint Nicholas, they put the Krampus into the foreground" (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine) ("Api nem szereti, ha [húsvétkor] azt mondjuk, hogy jön a nyuszi. ... és elég is, ha jön a Jézuska [karácsonykor] meg a Mikulás, de hogy nyuszi jön, hát kicsoda az a nyuszi, kicsoda nagyság az. Hiszen a leggyávább állat ... Azt én sem tudom miért a nyuszi jött divatba, mikor annak semmi köze a húsvéthoz. A báránykát meg egészen kiszorították. Ugy, mint mikuláskor a krampuszt helyezték előtérbe"). As a result of Molnár's strict Roman Catholic upbringing, her worldview was influenced by religion and also led her to adopt her family's political value system. The Molnár family endorsed Governor Miklós Horthy and his followers and Molnár herself regarded Horthy with special respect for two main reasons. One was Horthy's age, which led Molnár (as well as other Christian adolescent diary-writers) to regard him as a wise, elderly father figure of the Hungarian nation. The other reason was Horthy's involvement in religious holidays, in particular the most important 20 August, the day Saint Stephen offered Hungary to the Virgin Mary.

Molnár's diary suggests that by the time she began writing her diary at age fourteen, she had internalized her family's anti-Semitism and regarded Jews as a "separate race" from Hungarians. Owing to the fact that Molnár was socialized in a deeply religious Christian family that harbored anti-Semitic views, Molnár regarded herself as a Christian first and foremost and treated her national identity as self-evident tying Hungarianness to the Christian faith and consequently regarding Jews as the "Other." For instance, her reference "igaz magyar" ("true Hungarian") denotes actively religious Christians, a group Molnár strongly identified with and came to conflate with the national category of Hungarians and thus her diary shows on several accounts that she made a sharp distinction between Christian Hungarians and Jews whom she considered a separate race and identified based on stereotypical physiognomic markers such as the shape of the nose. Molnár also regarded impolite or unconventional behavior as Jewish.

When Molnár began keeping her diary, the Molnár family lived in modest circumstances that stood in sharp contrast with the perceived wealth of their Hungarian Jewish neighbors, the Valkó family. The two families lived in an apartment building that was, in typical architectural fashion of the time, built around a rectangular courtyard surrounded by apartments on all sides. The ground floor hosted various shops. The cheap and small two-room apartments on the next floor faced the courtyard, while the larger and more expensive three- to four-room apartments had a view to the street. The Molnár family's apartment faced the courtyard and thus received no natural sunlight. In contrast, the Valkó family lived in a three-room apartment facing the street and unlike the Molnár family where four people shared two rooms, in the Valkó family each person had their own room. According to a 1941 consensus of the apartments and their residents (*Budapest IV. 1419. j.*), the head of the family was Károly Valkó, owner of a drug store that operated as a family business with Valkó's wife serving as a chemist producing toiletries and their daughter Lili working as an apprentice. Since Molnár internalized her family's anti-Semitic prejudices, but had little exposure to Jewish society, she projected her experiences of the Valkó family onto Jews in general, regarding Jews as a homogeneous group of the rich, rude, and oppressive elite. For instance, Molnár imagined the Valkó family exceedingly rich on account of the fact that they lived in a three-room apartment with one room per person while her own family was crowded in a two-room apartment and thus she considered the arrangement of the apartments "unjust" (it is interesting that she considered her family's financial situation "unjust" when in fact they also owned a cottage [see below], a fact that places her family's position hardly "poor"). Consider the following excerpt from July 1941, where Molnár discusses how the Jews had an oppressive presence in Budapest:

Now, a few more words on Jews. Needless to say, there's hoards of them in Pest, may the wind blow them all away into the Sahara. When there is a Jewish holiday, there's hardly a shop or two open on the Boulevard. There are so many hook-nosed Grüns and Svarces and Grünhuts you could clog the Danube with them. The German soldiers were right when they said this wasn't Budapest, it's Judepest. It's terribly irritating how they can buy anything and everything. They, the big ones are all you see in cafés and on the beach. They said that when the war was over, Hitler would come and put the Jews in order. I have nothing more to say except for the Valkós living next door. Well, well ... Well, here you are, I have informed you of the situation at present, because our prospects are not very rosy, but we have no cause for despair, because we're not starving to death or too worn down and we get on.

No a zsidókról még egy pár szót. Mondanom sem kell, hogy ez dögvész van Pesten, hogy a szél fújja el őket a Szaharába. Ha zsidóünnep van a Körúton alig van egy-két bolt nyitva. Annyi a kampós orrú Grün és Svarc és Grünhut, hogy ellehetne rekeszteni velük a Dunát. Meg is mondták a német katonák, hogy ez nem Budapest hanem Judepest. Az szörnyű bosszantó, hogy nekik mindenre telik mindenre. Kávéházban, strandon, csak ők, a nagy ők vannak. Azt mondják, ha vége a háborúnak, Hitler itt is rendet teremt a zsidók között. Nem kell mást

megemlítenem, csak azt, hogy mellettünk a Valkóék. Nana ... Hát kértém szépen felvilágosítást nyújtottam a pilanatnyi helyzetről, mely nem éppen rózsás, elkeseredésre nincs okunk, mert éhen sem halunk, le sem rongyolódunk és élünk.

From the excerpt above, we can see that Molnár imagined Jews (who in formed about 15.8% of the Budapest population at the time [see Braham]) as an oppressive majority and Christians as the oppressed minority, which caused her to support the restrictive measures against Jews. Molnár's hopes that Hitler would suppress the Jewish population of Hungary seems to imply that she either did not perceive the changes brought on by previous anti-Semitic measures in Budapest, or considered these measures insufficient and ineffective. To Christian adolescents like Molnár, the persecution of Jews remained largely intangible in spite of the anti-Jewish Laws until the German occupation and the subsequent Holocaust of the Jewish population. The fact that Molnár used the term "Jew" to designate persons she perceived as Jewish rather than persons who were self-identified Jewish Hungarians suggests that she considered Jews a separate race. In the early entries of her diary, it is unclear on what basis she identified the Valkó-s as Jewish, but since her diary hints at the fact that two Jewish families were known to live at the apartment building at that time, Molnár might have classified the Valkó-s as Jewish based on her idea of the stereotypical rich Jews. Of course, by 1944 she knew for sure because the Valkó-s were put into a ghetto: on 19 March 1944, German troops occupied Hungary and as of 5 April Hungarian authorities were pressured by the Germans to prescribe that all Jews wear the yellow star and to start the ghettoization of Jews moving Jewish families out of their homes and into apartment buildings marked with the Star of David. From June 1944, Jewish citizens were gradually forced into these habitations, while outside of Budapest the Hungarian administration began to establish Jewish ghettos in various settlements to serve as deportation camps. Between May and June 1944, Hungarian authorities deported the entire Hungarian Jewish population living outside of Budapest to Auschwitz.

Because of the German occupation, Budapest was targeted for air raids and became unsafe, forcing the Molnár-s to evacuate Margit, her younger sister Judit, and their mother to their holiday home in Rákosszaba, a small town twenty kilometers outside of Budapest and only the father remained in the capital in order to work. Until October 1944, the children were rarely allowed to visit their father and relatives in Budapest, but even these few occasions deeply affected Margit. In April 1944, Margit and Judit traveled to Rákosszaba by train. Taking public transportation in Budapest to reach the train station was the first time Molnár could see masses of people wearing the yellow star while out on the streets. Here is an excerpt from her text: "Somehow Pest has completely changed as if it were something different from what it was a few months ago. A great many people on the streets, those weird yellow stars, all those German soldiers, a lot of tanks, booming canons" ("Valahogy Pest egészen megváltozott, mintha nem is az lett volna, ami pár hónappal ezelőtt. Az utcákon a rengeteg ember, azok a furcsa sárga csillagok, a rengeteg német katona, a sok tank, dübörgő ágyúk").

Molnár's subsequent diary entries show that she and her family often engaged in anti-Semitic behavior during their stay at Rákosszaba and that they viewed Jews as an acceptable subject of ridicule. In April 1944 Margit, her sister Judit, and their young niece put on a show for the adult members of the Molnár family in Rákosszaba which she and her sister had been preparing to put on before they moved out of Budapest. As the eldest, Molnár wrote the entire script of the show and preserved a handwritten program of it between the pages of her diary consisting on school recitals, songs, reenactments of scenes, and even a play called "A sánta zsidó" ("The Lame Jew"). The contents of the play are unknown, but we can assume that the title character played a comical role based on the fact that the role was played by Molnár's niece, who was three or four years old at the time. According to the diary, her niece's costume consisted of a large worn coat and a yellow star Molnár made from paper and colored with yellow pencil. Molnár preserved this prop along with the handwritten program in her diary.

To Molnár Budapest's once familiar cityscape became increasingly alien owing to the openly discriminatory measures imposed on citizens classified as Jewish. Molnár previously tended to classify persons as Jewish based on stereotypical markers like norm-violating behavior or physiognomic schemata. However, in April 1944, Molnár's assumptions about identifying markers were rendered useless when Hungarian law forced Jewish citizens to wear a yellow star in public, resulting in growing masses of people that Molnár would have previously been unable to classify as Jewish based on her own set of limited criteria. Due to the seemingly all-pervasive presence of the yellow star, Molnár felt that there were a lot more Jews than she previously imagined. In May 1944, she wrote that "Ah, Pest was so strange. It was so completely different from a few years ago. It's almost disgusting how many yellow stars there are. One can hardly see anything except yellow stars. As many as there are stars in the sky. And then there are a lot of closed shops, the Jewish ones" ("Jaj olyan furcsa volt Pest. Olyan egészen más, mint pár évvel ezelőtt. Az a rengeteg sárga csillag szinte undorító. Az ember mást alig lát, mint sárga csillagot. Annyi van mint az égen. Aztán rengeteg üzlet zárva, a zsidóké").

When Molnár heard about the establishment of Jewish ghettos, the news inspired a diary entry where she sympathized with Christians whose homes fell into areas designated for ghettoization. According to Molnár's diary, the Molnár family was informed that their apartment building in Budapest and their holiday home in Rákosszaba might both be affected by ghettoization, which alarmed the Molnárs and only served to increase their anti-Semitic sentiments. Molnár's entry from that period of uncertainty shows that she perceived ghettoization solely as a process in which Christians lost their homes to the Jews, who Molnár thought were being scattered across the various settlements to provide them with increased protection against air raids: "We can gather our things and move over. To give away our lovely little house to the Jews and we might not even get another in its place. Everyone was despondent and decided they would rather burn the house down than give it away. Thank the



good Lord that the ghetto will be at the new site instead of here, and according to recent news, Jews will be moving into the third street from here. I bet they're being scattered about because of the Anglos. I'm sorry for those who have to leave their houses that they acquired with hard work and effort and had grown to love so much" ("Foghatjuk a sátorfánkat és állhatunk odébb. Oda kell ajándékozni, a szép kis házunkat a zsidóknak és talán nem is kapunk helyette másikat. Mindenki el volt keseredve s elhatározták, hogy inkább felgyújtják a házat, semmint odaadják. Hála jó Istennek azonban mégsem itt lesz, hanem az új telepen, s újabb hírek szerint innen a 3.-ik utcában is zsidók fognak lakni. Biztos az angolok miatt szórják őket így széjjel. Sajnálom azokat, akiknek itt kell hagyni a házukat, amit munkával, fáradtsággal szereztek, s ami úgy a szívükhöz nőtt").

Once Molnár witnessed how Hungarian authorities forced Jews into ghettos, her diary entries reveal some compassion for the Jews for the first time. Her entry at the end of May 1944 shows how she began to reevaluate her previous views and attempted to abandon her prejudices in the face of the increasingly oppressive discriminatory measures against Jews. Her ambiguity is evident when she writes: "Today we saw from the corner how the Jews were moving out. The people went in groups up front and the cars behind them. It was such a sad sight somehow, not that I feel sorry for the Jews, but still ~~this war~~ it's so strange" ("Ma a sarokról láttuk a zsidókat, amint költöztek. Elöl mentek csoportosan az emberek, utánuk pedig a kocsik. Olyan szomorú látvány valahogy, nem mintha sajnálnám a zsidókat, csak mégis ez a háború olyan különös"). As we can see, Molnár first called what she witnessed a sad sight, but then went on to state that she did not feel sorry for the Jews. Her indifference was likely motivated by her previous conceptions of Jews as well as by her belief that the discriminatory measures were the just punishment for oppressing poor Christian Hungarians. Nevertheless, the phrase "csak mégis" ("but still") denies Molnár's earlier lack of compassion. We can also see from the crossed out words "ez a háború" ("this war") that Molnár interpreted ghettoization as a situation brought on by World War II rather than a natural turn of events.

The fact that the Valkó family had to move into the Jewish ghetto led her to regard the fate of the Valkó family with contempt and even malice: in 1943 the Molnárs suggested to their Jewish neighbors that the two families switch apartments, but the Valkós rejected the offer. It appears from Molnár's entries that the Molnár-s only made such suggestions to neighbors affected by the anti-Jewish laws presumably in the hope that one of their Jewish neighbors would agree to the switch due to their difficult circumstances and accept the unfair offer to trade their larger apartments for smaller ones. However, each neighbor declined which deeply offended Molnár and her family. In the spring of 1944, the Valkó-s were removed to a forced habitation, an event Molnár viewed as the well-deserved punishment for wealthy Jews thinking that such changes would be in her and her own group's interest in the long term and bring about an "ideal" social order where Jews were not wealthier than Christians. In May 1944, Molnár returned to the family's apartment in the capital for a short visit and her diary entry reads as follows:

Pest and our apartment are so detestable. Ah, when the war ends – ? – we will go and live in a beautiful apartment because this current one is hideous. We barely fit and the lights are always on. And we have been living here for seven years. We talked to Mrs Valkó. When we asked her to give us her apartment, switch with us because they are three people living in that huge three-room apartment, (Jew) replied indignantly that they really do need a room per person (We four live in two small rooms). Now? You know what happened? They have three name plates on the door. Three families are living in their apartment. Good, very good. Everyone gets their comeuppance sometime, you see. And the consultant. We've just found out they were Jews. We asked them to switch as well since they don't need such a big apartment, but of course they wouldn't switch, now their apartment had been dispossessed, someone whose house was bombed lives there and the seven of them have to make do in some one-room apartment in Király street. Everyone gets their comeuppance sometime.

Olyan utálatos Pest és a lakásunk, hogy csoda. Jaj, ha vége lesz a háborúnak – ? – gyönyörű lakásba megyünk lakni, mert ez a mostani undok. Alig férünk el benne és mindig ég a villany. Pedig már 7 éve itt lakunk. Beszéltünk a Valkónéval. Mikor kértük, hogy adjon oda a lakást, cseréljünk, mert ők 3-an laknak a hatalmas 3 szobás lakásban, (zsidó) azt felelte méltatlankodva, hogy 1 személynek igazán kell egy szoba (Mi négyen lakunk két szűk szobában). Most? Tudod mi történt? 3 névtábla van az ajtajukban. 3 család lakik a lakásukban. Jól van, nagyon jól. Jön még kutyára dér ugye. Meg a tanácsosék. Most derült ki, hogy zsidók. Tőlük is kértük, hogy cseréljenek, nem kell nekik olyan nagy lakás, hát persze nem cseréltek, most elvették tőlük a lakást, bombakárosult lakik benne, ők meg a Király utcában 1 szobás lakásban szűkölködnek valami 7-en. Jön kutyára dér.

On 15 October 1944, Horthy made an attempt to withdraw Hungary from the war, but his ill-prepared attempt was unsuccessful and the Arrow Cross Party assumed power with the help of the occupying German forces. In simplistic terms, the Arrow Cross was the Hungarian equivalent of the Nazi Party, which allowed them to gain the support of the Germans and force Horthy into resigning his post as governor. It is important to note that based on Molnár's diary, the Molnár family disliked the Arrow Cross despite the fact that they also supported the restrictive measures against Jews. After Horthy's attempt to withdraw Hungary from the war, some Jews immediately left their forced habitations and attempted to reclaim their former homes, while others took off the yellow star to try and escape persecution. However, shortly after the Arrow Cross assumed power in the capital, the Arrow Cross and the German forces began the Holocaust against the Jews of Budapest killing many on the streets or ordering the residents of starred houses and even protected houses (under the protection of neutral states) onto the bank of the Danube and executing them en masse. However, in February 1945, the Arrow Cross's reign of terror came to an end as their final attempt to break the siege of Budapest was crushed by Soviet forces at the cost of severe casualties and material damage.

Once the Arrow Cross assumed power in Budapest, the anti-Jewish terror became a reality to the non-Jewish adolescents living in the capital, the majority of whom including Molnár were informed of

the Arrow Cross's brutality by their parents. Her parents told her that the Christian and Jewish residents of an entire apartment building were shot into the Danube by German and Arrow Cross forces. In the following excerpt, Molnár writes of the cruelty of the Arrow Cross, but only showed compassion for the Christians, whom she called unfortunate for becoming victims of circumstance. Her entry is also telling of the fact that she now began to view the differences of the two groups in terms of religious affiliation rather than race. While in previous entries, she used the distinction of Hungarians versus Jews, the following entry instead uses the distinction of Christians versus Jews:

in their fear of Germans, they deliberately removed their yellow stars, running so wild as to move out of the Jewish houses and into their old ones, driving out the Christians who now lived there. But the Arrow Cross reined them in soon enough. During these past few days, Jews were dropping like flies in the fall. Sometimes there were cruel murders. In several cases, the German soldiers ordered the residents of an entire Jewish house, the unfortunate Christian tenants included, to the bank of the Danube, where they lined them up in front of the water in a row and gunned them down. They fell into the water and the waves carried them away.

a németektől való félelmükben önkényűleg levették a sárga csillagot, sőt nagyra nőtt szarvakkal kiköltöztek a zsidóházból s a régi lakásukból kikergetve a keresztényeket, ők ültek bele. De a nyilasok hamar letörték a szarvukat. E pár nap alatt hullott a zsidó, mint ősszel a légy. Néha a kegyetlenségig öldököltek. Megtörtént több esetben, hogy német katonák kivezényeltek egy egész zsidóházat a bent lakó szerencsétlen keresztényekkel együtt a Duna-partra, odaállították őket a víz elé, és sorban legépfegyverezték őket. Beleestek a vízbe, elvitték őket a hullámok.

In November 1944 Molnár wrote a diary entry in which she expressed her compassion for the Jewish victims of the Arrow Cross. By the end of October, the Molnár family and their acquaintances often discussed the cruelty of the Arrow Cross and the German forces in Budapest, which caused Molnár despite her deep-seated prejudices against Jews to condemn the brutality of the Arrow Cross. In their Rákócscsaba cottage Molnár received news of the anti-Jewish terror from her close relatives or acquaintances of the family, whose words Molnár accepted implicitly as truthful and wrote down in her diary as facts although at the same time she appears disturbed and affected by her relatives and acquaintances' accounts: "The Jews are being gunned down in the streets for no reason, an acquaintance saw how a seventeen-eighteen-year-old Arrow Cross man stabbed a pregnant Jewish woman in the stomach. Even though she begged him on her knees with her hands put together not to hurt her. The woman's two-year-old daughter was standing right next to her. It makes our hearts bleed, these terrible things we hear of the actions of the Arrow Cross. And whoever says even one good word in favor of the Jews gets gunned down too" ("A zsidókat az utcán ok nélkül lelövöldözik, egy ismerős látta, amint egy 17-18 éves nyilas suhanc egy állapotos zsidó nőnek beleszúrta a hasába. Pedig az térden állva összetett kézzel könyörgött, hogy ne bántsa. Az asszony mellett ott állt kétesztendő kislánya is. Az embernek a szíve vérzik, olyan elrettentő eseteket hallunk a nyilasok tetteiről. S aki a zsidók mellett egy jó szót is mond, azt is lepuffantják").

Reading Molnár's diary entries, it is evident that the news of the Arrow Cross terror played a decisive role in the temporary suspension of her anti-Semitic prejudices and traumatized her to such an extent that she even made mentions of the anti-Jewish terror during the Soviet occupation of Hungary. In January 1945, Budapest was liberated from the siege, which meant that the city could begin clearing away debris and corpses from the streets. In the middle of February, Molnár's mother saw a truck full of dead women and girls being taken to the morgue and since the corpses showed signs of torture, she believed them to be victims of the Arrow Cross. She then relayed the news of the suffering of these women and adolescent girls to her daughter, temporarily inspiring compassion in Molnár. Owing to her mother's emphasis on how many of the victims were young girls, it may have occurred to Molnár that she, her younger sister, and her mother could have met a similar fate if they had been Jewish. Molnár emphasized in her entries how the anti-Jewish terror was committed by Hungarians against Hungarians and the Arrow Cross effectively waged war on its own people, which means that as a consequence of her trauma Molnár temporarily accepted the Jews as Hungarians as part of a group from which she had previously excluded them. It is important to note that the following excerpt is the only place in Molnár's diary where Jews are included into her own group and where she even went so far as to judge the actions of the Arrow Cross more severely than that of the occupying Soviet forces:

They brought an entire truck full of naked corpses. Most of them were women, mutilated, with bruised bodies and faces distorted with horror. They unloaded them and took them to the morgue. It was a terrible sight, it was the Arrow Cross of course who murdered these poor people, whose only crime was that they were Jews. The majority of them were women and young girls, naked and exposed to the world. They murdered the poor things amid terrible despicable torture, and a hundred others, too. Can we even say anything if the Russians are being cruel? They are enemies. But the Arrow Cross have done this to Hungarian people and for that they deserve a hundred deaths.

Egy egész stráfkocsi meztelen hullák hoztak. Többnyire nők volt, megcsonkítva, véraláfutásos testekkel, kínzásoktól eltorzult arccal. Rakták le őket és vitték be a halottas házba. Rettenetes látvány volt, persze a nyilasok gyilkolták le szegényeket, csak az volt a bűnük, hogy zsidók voltak. Többnyire nők és fiatal lányok, ruha nélkül száz meg száz szemnek kitéve. Rettenetes gyalázatos kínzások között haltak meg szegények, sok száz társukkal egyetemben. Szólhatunk-e valamit, ha az oroszok kegyetlenkednek? Ők ellenségek. De hogy a nyilasok magyar emberekkel így bántak el, azért megérdemelnek száz halált.

Despite Molnár's temporary compassion for the victims of the anti-Jewish terror, once the war ended and social order was more or less restored in Hungary, her anti-Semitic prejudices returned (and this was also the case in Budapest altogether: on the immediate post-war situation of Jewish Hungarians see, e.g., Pető). In April 1945, a mere two months after the previous compassionate entry, Molnár

reflected on the restrictive measures issued before and during the war, concluding that these measures were justified but largely unsuccessful in their attempts to curb what she perceived as the wealthy, oppressive Jewish elite. Nevertheless, her opinion of the Arrow Cross also prevailed, possibly on account of the fact that she could not reconcile the cruelty of the Arrow Cross with her own Christian values, which would explain why she left the terror out of her enumeration of the oppressive measures against Jews. It is also interesting to note that in her entry, Molnár uses an anti-Semitic Hungarian reference to describe the current situation in Hungary, one that is about a legend involving a Jew. According to the legend, a Jewish coachman from the village of Mád set out on his cart, but fell asleep on the coach during his journey. Without guidance, his horse brought him back to his own house and so upon waking up he found himself arriving to the same place he left and Molnár's entry reads: "The Jews are on the rise again, it was a waste wreaking havoc with the anti-Jewish laws and yellow stars and locking them into ghettos. We are back at square one like the 'Jew from Mád,' it's a good thing the Christians weren't dealt with in the same way" ("A zsidóknak újra felragyogott, kár volt a nagy felfordulást csinálni zsidótörvényekkel, meg sárga csillaggal, gettóba zárással. Ott vagyunk ismét mint a 'mádi zsidó' még jó, hogy a keresztényekkel nem bántak el hasonlóképpen").

In conclusion, my selected analysis of Margit Molnár's diary shows that she viewed the persecution of Jewish Hungarians without compassion and even a degree of malice until the anti-Jewish terror of the Arrow Cross. This terror instilled temporary compassion in her until the war ended and when her anti-Semitic prejudices returned. Before the Arrow Cross assumed power, Molnár viewed the Hungarian anti-Jewish laws as the just punishment of the wealthy Jewish elite or a series of measures aimed at changing the social order she perceived as unequal and biased in favor of Jews over Christian Hungarians. Molnár only began to sympathize with the Jews during the terror of the Arrow Cross, but her prejudices ultimately prevailed and resurfaced once the war was over, because she interpreted the restoration of society as a return to the previous unequal status quo where poor Christian Hungarians were being oppressed by a wealthy Jewish elite.

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